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CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM
OPERATIONAL MEMO #6**

TO: Child and Adult Care Food Program Sponsors

FROM: Mary Ann Chartrand, Director
Grants Coordination and School Support

DATE: January 3, 2005

SUBJECT: Mealtime Memo for Child Care

Enclosed are three issues of the *Mealtime Memo for Child Care*. The titles are, "Happy Mealtimes for Healthy Kids," "Start Your Day the Breakfast Way!," "Grains and Breads - What is a Serving?"

Developed by the National Food Service Management Institute, these publications reinforce the importance of the Food Guide Pyramid and emphasize that physical activity will help children grow healthy. Subsequent issues of the *Mealtime Memo for Child Care* will be provided when published.

If you have any questions regarding this publication you may contact the Child and Adult Care Food Program staff at (517) 373-7391.

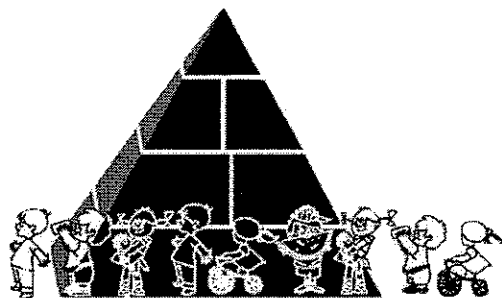
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Mealtime Memo

FOR CHILD CARE



2004

Happy Mealtimes for Healthy Kids

A meal is a planned social interaction centering around food. When mealtimes are happy, everyone benefits.

Mealtimes in child care centers should reflect “best practices” in child care. Important child care goals surrounding mealtimes are to help children eat healthy meals today and develop positive eating habits that will last a lifetime.

At the child care center, key considerations are that children

- Have a pleasant mealtime atmosphere
- Practice appropriate mealtime behavior with little intervention
- Develop good eating habits
- Eat when they are hungry
- Stop when they are full
- Enjoy a variety of foods

An important “best practice” is to remember and implement the “Division of Responsibility in Feeding Children.”

Division of Responsibility in Feeding Children

Adults are responsible for

- Setting regular times for meals and snacks
- Planning and preparing healthy meals and snacks
- Assuring that the children come to the table at meal and snack times
- Creating a pleasant mealtime environment

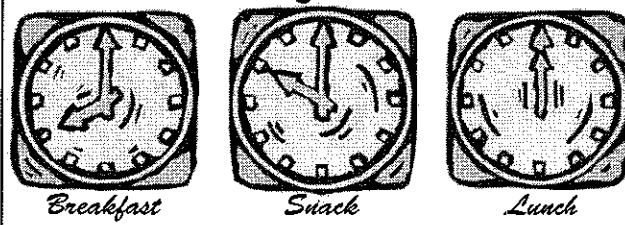
Children are responsible for

- Deciding which of the healthy foods offered they want to eat
- Deciding how much food they want to eat

Why should regular times for meals and snacks be established?

Children have small stomachs and large energy needs. This means children need to eat smaller amounts and more frequently than adults. Experts tell us that children need to eat every two or three hours during the day. This often means a breakfast, morning snack, lunch, afternoon snack, dinner, and evening snack. If children become overly hungry they can be irritable, have a difficult time focusing on tasks, and act out in a variety of ways.

Adults Schedule Regular Meals and Snacks



Infants, however, should be fed “on demand.” That means infants should be fed whenever they show signs of being hungry. Even from birth, infants are very good at knowing when they are hungry and full. When they are hungry, they suck and suck; and when they are full, they close their little lips and do not eat any more. It’s great to watch infants eat and know they are very skilled at eating when they are hungry and that they stop eating when they are full.

Gradually, after about a year, toddlers can begin eating at more regular meal and snack times. It takes a little practice for toddlers to learn how much they need to eat at a meal or snack to last them until the next meal or snack. By the time a child is about two years of age, he or she can usually wait a short time for the next meal or snack. In other words, when two-year-olds tell you they are hungry, they are usually content if you tell them you’re making the snack and it will be ready in a few minutes. Offering meals and snacks at regular times means that children do not have to wait too long for a meal or snack.



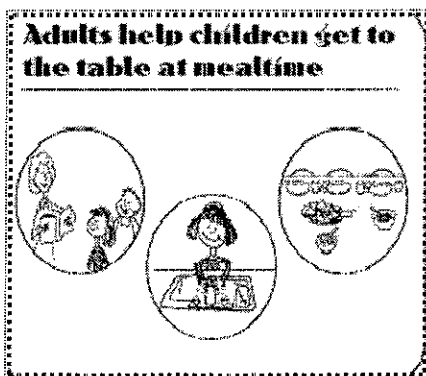
Mealttime Memo FOR CHILD CARE

How should healthy meals be planned and served?

Pay special attention to children's nutritional needs, color and texture of the food, ethnic considerations, and the goal of offering a variety of "easy-to-like foods" and "new foods" throughout the menu. Using cycle menus assures that children are offered meals that meet their nutritional needs and that new foods are introduced on a regular and repeated basis. When planning meals and snacks for children, adults should keep in mind the concept of "everyday foods" and "sometimes foods." By carefully planning meals and snacks, you can be assured that children are offered wholesome foods for meals and snacks. This makes it much easier to keep "sometime foods" like soft drinks, candy, and potato chips as occasional foods.

Why should you encourage children to come to the table at meal and snack times?

Children can be very involved with their activities. Occasionally when you tell them it is "time for snack" or "time for lunch," they may be hesitant to stop what they are doing. A transition time between active play and mealtime can help children "slow down" enough to focus on the meal or snack and eating. Music time, story time, circle



time activities, or having the children help set the table or help with some food preparation activities often serves this purpose. Children may say they are not hungry for a meal or snack. You can assure them that if they

are not hungry they do not need to eat but they should join the table so they can participate in the conversation. Often children will change their minds and have something to eat once they are sitting with their friends and watching their friends and teachers enjoy a great meal or snack.

What is a pleasant mealtime environment? How is it created?

A pleasant mealtime is a relaxed time to share food and conversation. When mealtimes are pleasant, you and the children will enjoy the meal more. Children are more likely to eat well when they are in a pleasant environment. Plan carefully and offer meals to children in a relaxed setting. A transition activity between active play and mealtime is a good time to remind children of what they can expect and what you expect during the meal. When children understand what will "happen next" and how they are expected to behave, they feel more comfortable and can relax during the meal. Suggested ideas include:

- We will be having lunch together in a few minutes.
- Let's wash our hands and then we will sit down at the tables together.
- Remember to use our inside voices.

Another way to make mealtimes pleasant is to encourage child-directed conversation, focusing on the child's interests and experiences.

Encourage the children to talk more than the adults. The conversation at mealtimes does not need to be about the food, although occasionally the staff may want to draw the children's attention to the



food to encourage them to try a new food or to help them focus on eating. The mealtime conversation around food may include what kinds of foods are being offered, what color the foods are, how they are prepared, if the children eat these same foods at home, where the foods come from, and a variety of related topics. Conversation should not focus on which foods a child has chosen or how much a child has eaten. If the meal is about to end, you may want to ask the children if they have had enough to eat or remind children that the next meal or snack will be offered after nap or at a certain time. Children should not be rushed through their meal. Careful planning and experience will let you know how much time the children need to eat in a relaxed setting.

Sources

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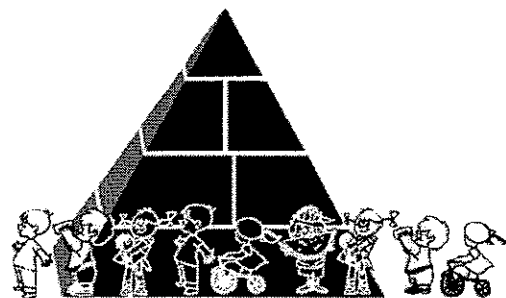
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This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through a grant agreement with The University of Mississippi. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. The University of Mississippi is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA Employer.

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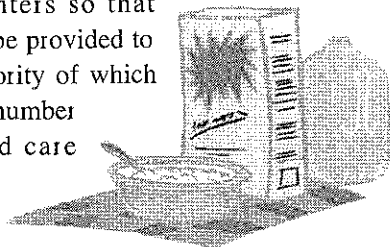


2004

Start Your Day the Breakfast Way!

Breakfast Meal Patterns in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

The CACFP is a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) program that provides reimbursement and donated foods to day care centers, family day care homes, and Head Start centers so that nutritious meals can be provided to participants, the majority of which are children. As the number of children in child care increases, CACFP providers can play a vital role in improv-



ing the eating habits of children through nutrition education. Breakfast gets children ready to learn and maintains their well-being. Children should develop a lifelong habit of eating breakfast. Some good reasons for eating breakfast include the following:

- ☐ Improves behavior and learning environments
- ☐ Helps to minimize discipline problems
- ☐ Provides daily key nutrients
- ☐ Stabilizes blood sugar levels, which regulate appetite and energy
- ☐ Reduces the risk of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular diseases
- ☐ Maintains an appropriate weight control reducing impulsive overeating
- ☐ Helps in developing a healthy cholesterol profile with age
- ☐ Helps well-being in children

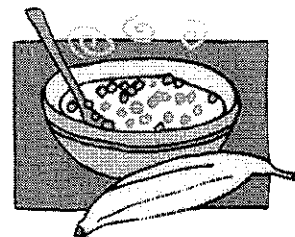
Children do not have breakfast at home for several reasons:

- ☐ Overslept
- ☐ Lack of time or hectic mornings at home
- ☐ Not hungry in the morning
- ☐ Lack of resources
- ☐ Not a priority or important

The breakfast meal pattern can be easy to prepare and cost-effective.

Tips for Planning the Breakfast Meal Pattern for CACFP

- ☐ Follow the CACFP meal pattern for breakfast
- ☐ Keep the menu preparation simple.
- ☐ Select the type of milk appropriate for the age of the child. Breastmilk is a creditable meal component for infants birth through 11 months. The only creditable alternative to breastmilk is iron-fortified infant formula. Whole cow's milk is not creditable for infants. The American Academy of Pediatrics and health and nutrition experts do not recommend serving reduced fat, low-fat, or nonfat milk to children under two years of age. Children under the age of two need additional fat in their diets for normal growth and development.
- ☐ Serve a variety of vegetables, fruits, and juices. Fruit or vegetable juice must be full-strength.
- ☐ Grains/Breads must be made from whole-grain, bran, germ and/or enriched meal or flour. A cereal must be whole-grain, enriched, or fortified
- ☐ Contact your State agency or sponsor for information.



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Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Pattern for Children

Breakfast for Children

Select All Three Components for a Reimbursable Meal

Food Components	Ages 1-2	Ages 3-5	Ages 6-12 ¹
1 milk, fluid	1/2 cup	3/4 cup	1 cup
1 fruit/vegetable			
juice, ² fruit and/or vegetable	1/4 cup	1/2 cup	1/2 cup
1 grains/bread³			
bread or	1/2 slice	1/2 slice	1 slice
cornbread or biscuit or roll or muffin or	1/2 serving	1/2 serving	1 serving
cold dry cereal or	1/4 cup	1/3 cup	3/4 cup
hot cooked cereal or	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup
pasta or noodles or grains	1/4 cup	1/4 cup	1/2 cup

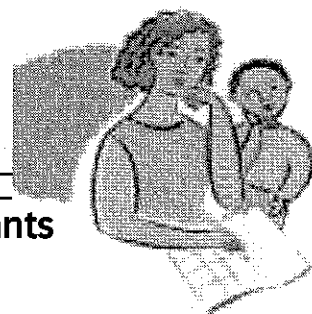
¹ Children age 12 and older may be served larger portions based on their greater food needs. They may not be served less than the minimum quantities listed in this column.

² Fruit or vegetable juice must be full-strength

³ Breads and grains must be made from whole-grain or enriched meal or flour

Cereal must be whole-grain or enriched or fortified.

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/ProgramBasics/Meals/Breakfast.htm>



Child and Adult Care Food Program Meal Pattern for Infants

Child Care Infant Meal Pattern

Breakfast

Birth through 3 Months	4 through 7 Months	8 through 11 Months
4-6 fluid ounces of formula ¹ or breastmilk ^{2,3}	4-8 fluid ounces of formula ¹ or breastmilk ^{2,3} ; 0-3 tablespoons of infant cereal ^{1,4}	6-8 fluid ounces of formula ¹ or breastmilk ^{2,3} ; and 2-4 tablespoons of infant cereal ¹ ; and 1-4 tablespoons of fruit or vegetable or both

¹ Infant formula and dry infant cereal must be iron-fortified.

² Breastmilk or formula, or portions of both, may be served; however, it is recommended that breastmilk be served in place of formula from birth through 11 months.

³ For some breastfed infants who regularly consume less than the minimum amount of breastmilk per feeding, a serving of less than the minimum amount of breastmilk may be offered, with additional breastmilk offered if the infant is still hungry.

⁴ A serving of this component is required when the infant is developmentally ready to accept it

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/ProgramBasics/Meals/InfantBreakfast.htm>

The CACFP meal pattern for breakfast is translated in Spanish on the Internet web site:

http://www.nal.usda.gov/childcare/Cacfp/mealpatterns_spanish.html

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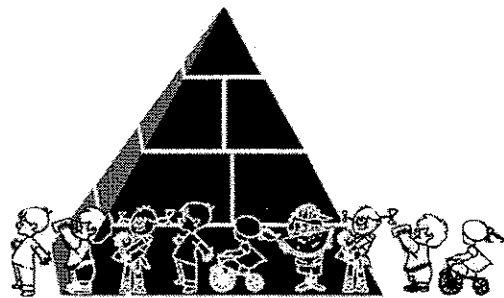
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2004

Grains and Breads – What Is a Serving?

Determining serving sizes of grains and breads designed to meet the needs of specific age groups in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) can be a challenge to child care providers. Responses to questions frequently raised with regard to variety, healthfulness, and availability of grain/bread products and children's acceptance of those products will be reviewed in this *Mealttime Memo*.

What is the role of grain in a child's diet?

The answer to this question is both simple and "complex."

- Grains are good sources of complex carbohydrates, which are derived from plants.
- Grains contain B vitamins such as riboflavin, niacin, thiamin, and other B vitamins.
- Grains provide much needed fiber in the diets of both children and adults

Is there a standard for determining creditable grains and breads?

Creditable grains and breads

- must be made with enriched* or whole-grain flour or fortified;**
- must indicate that the product is enriched or whole-grain made from enriched or whole-grain meal or flour, bran and/or germ; and
- must be provided in the quantities specified

*Enrichment has been defined as the restoration of vitamins and minerals lost during processing

**Food fortification has been defined as the addition of one or more essential nutrients to a food

What are some of the creditable grain and bread products that can be served in the CACFP?

The following list includes just some grain and bread products that may be offered in CACFP:

- Bread sticks, saltine crackers and hard pretzels
- Bagels, biscuits, breads (white, wheat, whole-wheat, Italian, French), pizza crust and tortillas, corn or wheat
- Pancakes, waffles, corn muffins
- Macaroni, noodles, pasta (all shapes and varieties), and rice
- Ready-to-eat breakfast cereal (cold, dry)

Breakfast or Snack only

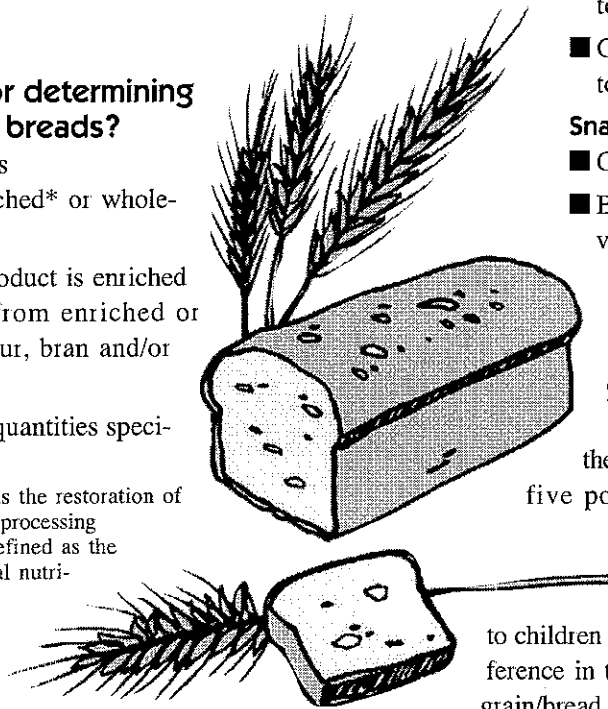
- Granola bars, plain; sweet rolls and toaster pastry (unfrosted)
- Grain fruit bars; sweet rolls and toaster pastry (frosted)

Snack only

- Cake (plain, unfrosted)
- Brownies, plain and cake (all varieties, frosted)

Do portion sizes of grains and breads differ by age group?

"Yes." It can best be explained by the following illustrations. In Table One five popular grain/bread food items are served to children 1-5 years of age. In Table Two the same grain/bread food items are served to children 6 years of age and older. Note the difference in the estimated portion sizes of all five grain/bread food items



Mealtime Memo FOR CHILD CARE

Table One

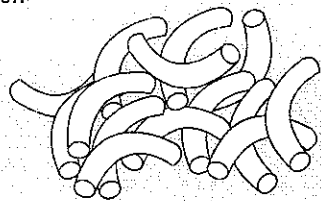
Food Item	Estimated Portion Size
Cereal O's, cold, dry	1/3 cup or .5 oz, whichever is less
Small animal crackers	6 each
Granola bar, plain, breakfast or snack only	1 bar, minimum weight 25 grams
Cookie, plain about 2 1/4", snack only	2 cookies
Macaroni, noodles, pasta all shapes	1/4 cup cooked

These serving sizes meet the meal pattern requirements for children 1-5 years of age

Table Two

Food Item	Estimated Portion Size
Cereal O's, cold, dry	3/4 cup or 1 oz, whichever is less
Small animal crackers	12 each
Granola Bar, Plain, breakfast or snack only	2 bars
Cookie, plain about 2 1/4" snack only	4 cookies
Macaroni, noodles, pasta all shapes	1/2 cup cooked

These serving sizes meet the meal pattern requirements for 6 years of age and older.



Are the CACFP serving sizes of grains/breads different from food product label serving sizes?

There is a difference between the serving size on a package label and a CACFP serving size. Look at the next two figures which demonstrate what is a serving on the Cereal O's food label and what is a CACFP serving of the same food product

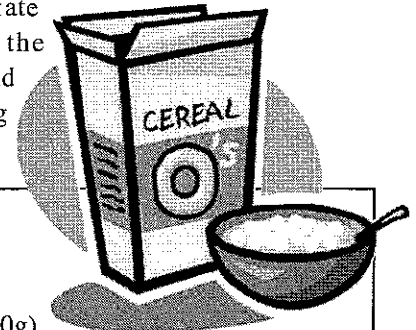


Figure One

Cereal O's Food Label
Nutrition Facts
Serving Size = 1 cup (30g)
Servings per container 10

This food label states a serving size of Cereal O's is 1 cup and the 30 grams in parentheses refers to the weight of the product. The number of servings per container is 10.

Figure Two

Cereal O's CACFP serving
1 Serving = 1/3 cup (0.5 oz)

This figure states a serving size of Cereal O's is 1/3 cup by volume and 0.5 oz by weight. This serving size meets the meal pattern requirements for children 1-5 years of age.

Summarizing what we've learned...

- All age groups do not receive the same serving size
- There is a standard for determining creditable grains and breads.
- There is a difference between the serving size on a food label and the CACFP serving.

Sources

Annex 4-Micronutrient fortification of food: Technology and quality control Retrieved September 8, 2004, from <http://www.fao.org/docrep/W2840E/w2840e0b.htm>

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